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In re Application of :
Bruce W. Kneller :
Application No. 10/785,600 :
Filed: February 23, 2004 :
Attorney Docket No. BKNL-001-101 :
:

OFFICE OF PETITIONS

ON PETITION

This is a decision on the petition filed April 24, 2008, to revive the above identified application under 37 CFR 1.137(a)¹.

The petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) is **DISMISSED**.

A non-Final Office Action was mailed May 3, 2007 and set a three (3) month shortened statutory period for reply. Since the maximum period of time obtainable for an extension of time had elapsed and since no proper reply had been received, the application became abandoned on August 6, 2007. Accordingly, a Notice of Abandonment was mailed December 27, 2007.

PETITION UNDER 37 CFR 1.137(a)

The Commissioner may revive an abandoned application if the delay in responding to the relevant outstanding Office requirement is shown to the satisfaction of the

¹A grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) must be accompanied by:

(1) the required reply, unless previously filed; In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In a nonprovisional utility or plant application filed on or after June 8, 1995, and abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may also be met by the filing of a request for continued examination in compliance with § 1.114. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof.

(2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(l);

(3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(a) was unavoidable; and
(4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.20(d)) required pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(c).

Commissioner to be "unavoidable".² Decisions on reviving abandoned applications on the basis of "unavoidable" delay have adopted the reasonably prudent person standard in determining if the delay was unavoidable:

The word 'unavoidable' . . . is applicable to ordinary human affairs, and requires no more or greater care or diligence than is generally used and observed by prudent and careful men in relation to their most important business. It permits them in the exercise of this care to rely upon the ordinary and trustworthy agencies of mail and telegraph, worthy and reliable employees, and such other means and instrumentalities as are usually employed in such important business. If unexpectedly, or through the unforeseen fault or imperfection of these agencies and instrumentalities, there occurs a failure, it may properly be said to be unavoidable, all other conditions of promptness in its rectification being present.³

The showing of record is inadequate to establish unavoidable delay within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 133 and 37 CFR 1.137(a).⁴ Specifically, an application is "unavoidably" abandoned only where petitioner, or counsel for petitioner, takes all action necessary for a proper response to the outstanding Office action, but through the intervention of unforeseen circumstances, such as failure of mail, telegraph, facsimile, or the negligence of otherwise reliable employees, the response is not timely received in the Office.⁵

Petitioner asserts that they were unavoidably delayed from filing a timely response to the Office action due to the attorney of record's failure to take action in this matter, failure to respond to their inquiries regarding the status of this patent application and finally his failure to advise the applicant that this patent application had become abandoned.

In order to establish unavoidable delay, petitioner must demonstrate diligence on the

²35 U.S.C. § 133.

³In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497, 514-15 (1912)(quoting Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31, 32-33 (1887)); see also Winkler v. Ladd, 221 F. Supp. 550, 552, 138 USPQ 666, 167-68 (D.D.C. 1963), aff'd, 143 USPQ 172 (D.C. Cir. 1963); Ex parte Henrich, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141 (1913). In addition, decisions on revival are made on a "case-by-case basis, taking all the facts and circumstances into account." Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 USPQ 977, 982 (D.C. Cir. 1982). Finally, a petition cannot be granted where a petitioner has failed to meet his or her burden of establishing that the delay was "unavoidable." Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 316-17, 5 USPQ2d 1130, 1131-32 (N.D. Ind. 1987).

⁴See MPEP 711(c)(III)(C)(2) for a discussion of the requirements for a showing of unavoidable delay.

⁵Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31 (Comm'r Pat. 1887).

part of the attorney of record in prosecution of the matter.⁶ Since petitioners can't say for certain whether the attorney of record exercised any diligence with respect to the prosecution of this application, rather than unavoidable delay and a lack of diligence on the part of petitioner's chosen representative, the facts point more towards negligence on the part of the attorney of record. The series of events outlined in the petition suggest that the attorney of record may have been negligent in prosecuting the application and in failing to inform petitioner that the application had become abandoned.

Unfortunately, however, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office must rely on the actions or inactions of duly authorized and voluntarily chosen representatives of the applicant, and applicant is bound by the consequences of those actions or inactions.⁷ Specifically, petitioner's delay caused by the mistakes or negligence of his voluntarily chosen representative however does not constitute unavoidable delay within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 133 or 37 CFR 1.137(a).⁸

As petitioner has not provided a showing of evidence to satisfy the requirements of a grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a), the petition will be dismissed.

ALTERNATIVE VENUE

Petitioner may wish to consider filing a renewed petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b)⁹,

⁶See Douglas v. Manbeck, 21 USPQ2d 1697, 1700 (E.D. Pa. 1991), *aff'd* 975 F.2d 869, 24 USPQ2d 1318 (Fed. Cir. 1992).

⁷Link v. Wabash, 370 U.S. 626, 633-34 (1962).

⁸Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 5 USPQ2d 1130 (N.D. Ind. 1987); Smith v. Diamond, 209 USPQ 1091 (D.D.C. 1981); Potter v. Dann, 201 USPQ 574 (D.D.C. 1978); Ex parte Murray, 1891 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 130, 131 (Comm'r Pat. 1891).

⁹Effective December 1, 1997, the provisions of 37 CFR 1.137(b) now provide that where the delay in reply was unintentional, a petition may be filed to revive an abandoned application or a lapsed patent pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b). A grantable petition filed under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by:

(1) the required reply, unless previously filed. In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof.

(2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(m);

(3) a statement that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) was unintentional. The Commissioner may require additional information where there is a question whether the delay was unintentional; and

(4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.20(d)) required pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(c)).

which now provides that where the delay in reply was unintentional, a petition may be filed to revive an abandoned application or a lapsed patent pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b).

The filing of a petition under the unintentional standard cannot be intentionally delayed and therefore should be filed promptly. A person seeking revival due to unintentional delay cannot make a statement that the delay was unintentional unless the entire delay, including the delay from the date it was discovered that the application was abandoned until the filing of the petition to revive under 37 CFR 1.137(b), was unintentional. A statement that the delay was unintentional is not appropriate if petitioner intentionally delayed the filing of a petition for revival under 37 CFR 1.137(b). A petition under 37 CFR 1.137 (b) also carries with it a petition fee of \$750.00 for a small entity and \$1500.00 for a large entity and the \$250.00 petition fee paid with the instant petition cannot be credited towards the fee for the petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b), if petitioner chooses to file such.

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

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Telephone inquiries concerning this matter may be directed to the undersigned
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